



Organizational Culture Study of the Elements Affecting Individual Effectiveness in the Social Sector

Nina Karakasheva¹ 

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Abstract: Organizational culture has been identified by numerous researchers as a factor, influencing both organizational and individual effectiveness. The purpose of this article is to present the methodology and the obtained results of a study of the elements of organizational culture that influence individual effectiveness in the social sector. The research methodology includes the development of an organizational culture model, based on thirty-eight elements, grouped into nine sections. The methodology includes a combination of the expert Delphi Method and variance analysis, used in the behavioral and social sciences. The research findings show where the concurrence of expert opinions is regarding the elements of organizational culture that are important for individual effectiveness in the social sector. The article provides a future research direction and indicates which elements of organizational culture should be included in a Recommended Model of Organizational Culture (RMOC) to improve individual effectiveness in Bulgaria's social sector.

1. INTRODUCTION

According to the [Center for New Economy and Society \(2024\)](#), social services are a policy area that is not seen by economists as an effective growth driver for high-income rather than low-income economies (p. 6). However, it can play an important role in achieving a social and solidarity economy for sustainable development. However, in Bulgaria, as discussed by [Kandilarov \(2023\)](#) severe negative consequences of “gradual decrease of population income increase of social inequalities and people living below the poverty line, higher risk of social exclusion” (p. 1) require urgent change though corrective government policies and adequate measures at local, regional and national levels. In addition, government policies and measures have to be targeted at improving current organizational performance and individual effectiveness as well as executed promptly to have a positive impact on society.

The influence of organizational culture on organizational and individual effectiveness has been studied by numerous researchers. [Agbo and Okeoma \(2020\)](#) concluded that “organizational culture had a great influence on the productivity of employees in organizations, which leads to better performance and profitability organizations” and they further recommended that “management should enforce security measures to protect the interest of the organizations” (p. 140). A literature review analysis by [Akpa et al. \(2021\)](#) found that clearly communicated work ethics, like-minded employees, shared beliefs and values, consistency, adaptability and effective communication system give employees a sense of identity in the organization, which increases their commitment to work and ultimately leads to better performance (p. 361). [Asikhia et al. \(2021\)](#) studied organizational performance and its relation to change management; they concluded that “by improving the readiness for change, organizations can strengthen their adaptability mechanisms and build their internal competencies for facing future uncertainties” (p. 67). Since change can play a proactive or reactive role, we developed an RMOC as a proactive type of change instrument in the social

¹ Technical University of Varna, Faculty of Electrical Engineering, Studentska 1, 9010, Varna, Bulgaria

sector to improve individual effectiveness and organizational performance. According to Aninkan (2018) organizations should adapt and respond to appropriate changes in a timely manner in order to improve organizational performance” (p. 109). Thus, the practical application of proactive organizational change instruments, like strong organizational culture models, can allow organizations to achieve sustainable organizational effectiveness, especially in the public sector.

This research paper is part of a series of scholarly articles that aim to contribute to the improvement of individual and organizational effectiveness via organizational culture models in the social services sector. The purpose of the study is to develop a Recommended Model of Organizational Culture (RMOC), which can be further utilized by policymakers to implement Recommended Standards for Organizational Culture (RSOC) to achieve sustainable improvement in the social services sector. The research methodology is based on the Delphi Method as the most appropriate of the expert decision-making methods in the social sector. The research data was collected in the winter of 2023 - spring of 2024, in Bulgaria.

2. HYPOTHESES AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research hypothesis suggests that the developed RMOC is confirmed and, therefore, it can be applied in practice to improve individual effectiveness in the social sector. The study assumed that the research hypothesis is confirmed, when there is positive consensus among the respondents regarding the researched sections in the RMOC. The research hypothesis is represented by the null hypothesis,

$$H_0: \mu_1 = \mu_2 = \mu_3 \dots \mu_m, \quad (1)$$

where H_0 is the null hypothesis; $\mu_1, \mu_2, \mu_3 \dots \mu_m$ are the numeric values of multiple means of m random samples. Therefore, the research hypothesis is rejected, when the multiple means are not equal:

$$H_a: \mu_i \neq \mu_j, \quad (2)$$

where H_a is the alternative hypothesis; μ_i, μ_j are the numeric values of any two multiple means.

For the needs of the study, it is accepted that the level of the stochastic error α should be the standard level used in most statistical studies $\alpha=0.05$, with five degrees of freedom ($df=5$). Therefore, the value of F_c is 5.05 ($F_c=5.05$). The alternative hypothesis (H_a) is confirmed, when

$$F > F_c \quad (3)$$

where F is the numeric value of the Fisher distribution; F_c is the upper critical numeric value of F ($F_c=5.05$); α is stochastic error; and df are the degrees of freedom. The null hypothesis is accepted and the alternative hypothesis is rejected, when

$$F < F_c \quad (4)$$

The research methodology applies a combination of the expert Delphi Method and variance analysis, widely used in behavioral and social sciences studies. First, we developed a RMOC that includes 38 research elements (statements), grouped into 9 research sections. Next, we approbated the developed RMOC, by applying the expert Delphi Method, using the opinions of social sector experts. The

research sample consisted of 58 social sector experts, representing public and private organizations, and government institutions, with diverse expert roles, managerial and non-managerial and years of professional experience. According to [Daniels \(2017\)](#), the Delphi Method is an “approach, initially developed by [Dalkey and Helmer \(1963\)](#) at Rand Corporation for business and economic forecasting” (p. 4). He stated that “as the participants express their own opinions, and are exposed to others opinions, there may be convergence and confluence of ideas as the rounds progress” (p. 5). During the approbation, a questionnaire was delivered to a panel of 58 experts (respondents).

The Delphi questionnaire consisted of 9 research sections and 38 research elements (statements). The first research section is regarding employee engagement and dedication to the organization; it examines participation in the decision-making process, on-the-job training, learning and development opportunities, communication with management and colleagues, employee incentives and rewards. The second research section relates to employee commitment to continuous quality improvement; it examines respect for and trust in supervisors’ decision-making, prioritization of high quality achievement, client satisfaction, ability to understand clients’ thoughts and feelings, responsiveness to client problems, and client feedback. [Metz et al. \(2020\)](#) conclude that the „improvement of customer service effectiveness can significantly enhance organizational effectiveness, as well as customer and employee satisfaction“ (p. 1). As [Hill et al. \(2020\)](#) concludes „improving the quality and safety of health care is a priority of governments, health care workers, and the public“ (p. 2). The third research section is regarding striving to achieve a good work climate in the organization; it examines four research elements: balancing personal and professional interests; taking on greater challenges and setting higher goals, equal opportunities and professional direction, and provision of resources to carry out effective work. The fourth research section relates to opportunities and attitudes for change and improvement in the organization; it examines: emphasis on specific employee relationships, legal contracts, change and gaining trust, respect and embracing change, and acceptance of different points of view. In their study, [Mahesh et al. \(2024\)](#) stated „peer challenges are a useful tool to improve adult social work practice“ (p. 15). The fifth research section regards the collectivistic nature of the organization; it examines four research elements: the use of the word „We“ more often than „I“, collective decision-making, group recognition of success and failure, and vacation decision-making. The sixth research section relates to the emotional nature of communication in the organization; it examines: the expression of thoughts and feelings, the release of tension through transparency and expressiveness, and making claims with pathos. The seventh research section relates to the nature of professional relations and contacts in the organization; it examines four research elements: indirect forms of work relationships, tactical relations, and situational morality. The eighth research section relates to attitudes in the organization towards the environment; it examines: attitude and willingness to compromise, desire for harmony and response to problems, focus on the other person, and accepting change as a natural process. Finally, the ninth research section relates to organizational culture’s relationship with national and regional culture; it examines four research elements: acting according to the interests of the internal group, doing well in the presence of uncertainty in their work environment, the role of the organization’s hierarchical system as facilitating communication and compromising to solve conflicts.

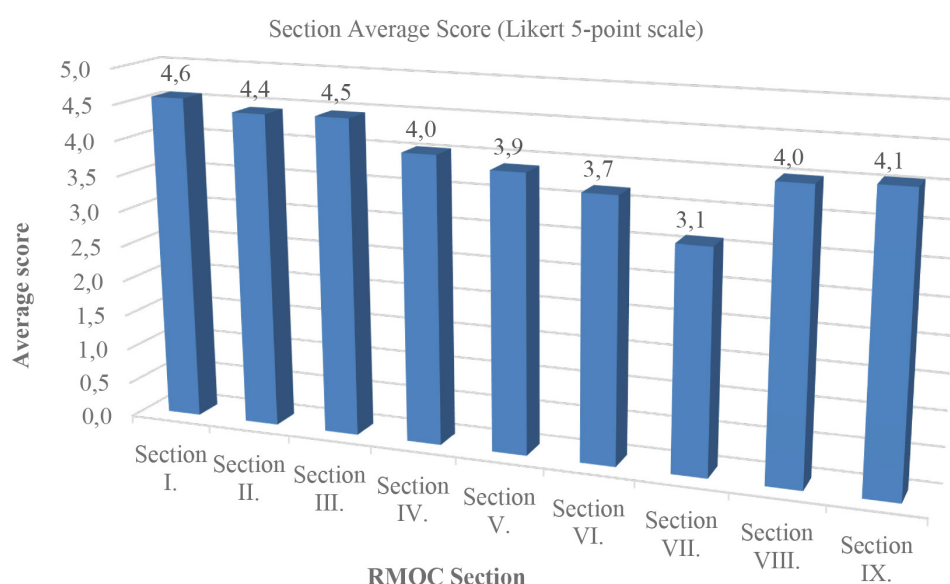
To ensure high-quality standard of the Delphi study, the consensus level among the panelists was defined, and the anonymity among panelists as well as the controlled feedback was fully guaranteed. The majority of the expert panel questionnaires were distributed electronically, using publicly available tools, Google Forms, to active social service professionals in Bulgaria. It was noticed that the panel members reached the defined consensus level in the first round; therefore the “Delphi process” comprised a single phase.

The experts expressed their opinions on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 to 5, where 1 represents 'Highly Disagree' and 5 represents 'Highly Agree'. Each statement represents a research element of the RMOC and is part of a research section. There are 9 research sections in the RMOC that are rated, based on the ratings of their research statements. The analysis of the data from the Delphi round involves the integration of a one-factor variance analysis, ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) method via the statistical SPSS software to analyze the differences between three or more groups and to show if there is a significant difference between them. When identifying the consensus sections, the obtained data is analyzed, using a dispersion model, which includes one dependent and fifty-eight independent variables. The dependent variable (Y_{ij}) is presented as the sum of the experts' ratings for all thirty-eight elements of organizational culture. Each independent variable (X_{ij}) denotes the evaluation of the i^{th} expert for the j^{th} research element of the RMOC that is being rated by the experts. To check the null hypothesis, the value of the ratio between the within-section and the between-section variance – that is the value of F , is compared with the critical value (F_c). If the null hypothesis is confirmed, there is a consensus among the experts regarding the researched sections of the RMOC.

The research analysis consists of the level of consensus (F) and the level of significance (Sig.), which the panel experts have given to the researched statements. Statements with significance levels of <1 have reached consensus, and those of 0 have absolute consensus. The consensus levels show the level of agreement among panel members on a specific statement. If the consensus is in the positive range of the 5-point Likert scale, these sections are confirmed to be important for individual effectiveness in the social sector. If the null hypothesis is rejected, then there is no consensus among the experts regarding specific researched sections of the developed RMOC.

3. RESEARCH FINDINGS

The research results show that in all nine Sections of the RMOC, the null hypothesis has been accepted and the RMOC is confirmed because, for each independent variable, the calculated value of Fisher Distribution (F) is less than the critical value $F < F_c$ ($F_c = 5.05$). Additionally, the concurrence of experts' opinions regarding each Section is in the positive part of the Likert scale (4-Agree, 5-Highly Agree), as shown in Graph 1:

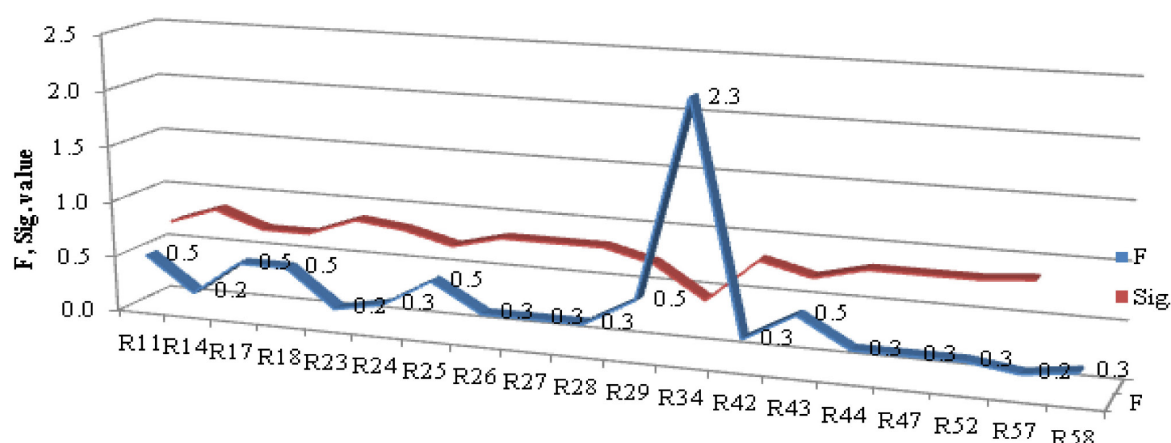


Graph 1. Average scores of RMOC research sections

Source: Own research

These results show a lack of any dispersion in the expert opinions in sections I, II, IV, V, VI, VII, VIII and IX.

A very low, insignificant dispersion exists in Section III among 19 out of 58 respondents, which represent 33% of the expert opinions (Respondents #11, #14, #17, #18, #23, #24, #25, #26, #27, #28, #29, #34, #42, #43, #44, #47, #52, #57, and #58). In these Sections, the numeric value of F is between 0.2 and 2.3, and the numeric value of Sig. (Significance of variance) is between 0.4 and 0.9, as shown in Graph 2.



Respondents with very low dispersion in opinion in Section III of the RMOC

Graph 2. F-values and significance of dispersion in 33% of respondents in Section III. of the RMOC

Source: Own research

4. FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

This research has applied a new approach to a well-known research methodology that seeks to contribute to the standardization of organizational culture elements in the social sector. It can be beneficial to the scientific community to join efforts to conduct the same study in other geographic parts of Bulgaria, as well as other European Union countries, in order to confirm these research results on a larger scale. Such further research would allow social services sector experts to rate and propose additional organizational culture research elements that may increase individual effectiveness, accounting for the impact of their national and regional cultures.

Acknowledging the fact that the social services sector is not considered a factor for economic growth in developed EU countries, their government social policies can be further examined and researched to provide a better understanding of what individual and organizational effectiveness challenges they are faced with. In Bulgaria, further research directions have to be focused on utilizing available research findings in a timely manner due to the pressing, systematic societal issues throughout the years.

Further research can also be conducted to assess the potential of the RMOC and future RSOC to increase the effectiveness of efforts, such as The Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship and the resolution of the UN General Assembly since April 2023, focused on promoting social and solidarity economy for sustainable development.

5. CONCLUSION

In order for individual effectiveness and organizational performance to be improved, social sector organizations can focus on strengthening their organizational cultures. This study has confirmed that organizational culture includes important elements of strategic performance that impact on a personal and organizational level. Since the research findings showed that the experts agree that the researched elements are important to individual effectiveness in the social sector, we conclude that the RMOC can be used to potentially increase the effectiveness of social workers and experts in public and private organizations.

The study has allowed the author to move forward with further research and to develop a prototype of Recommended Standards for Organizational Culture (RSOC) to increase overall effectiveness in the social services sector. The currently developed RMOC is a reliable and long-term management tool for improving individual effectiveness sustainably. Therefore, we advise government authorities to consider and seek opportunities to implement Recommended Standards for Organizational Culture (RSOC) within the social sector.

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